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A Working Theology

for

A Christian Teacher in Japan.

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FOR

A Christian Teacher in Japan.

By

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To the Christian Teachers
who are faithfully working in government schools in Japan
this booklet is dedicated.

PREFACE.

THE contents of this little volume was presented in the form of a paper at the annual conference of the secretaries and teachers of the Young Men's Christian Association, held at Gotemba last August.

It appears now, at the request of the conference, in printed form, essentially as given at Gotemba, with the exception of occasional amplifications and the addition of the chapters on the Work of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

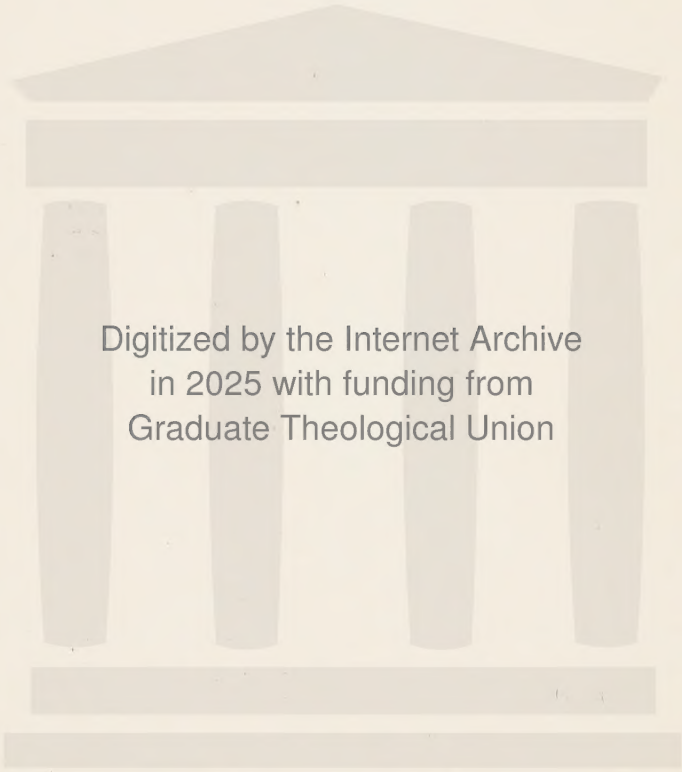
The writer's purpose was to outline in condensed form and untechnical terms, a necessary working equipment in theology for the average college graduate, when faced with the surpassing opportunity of presenting the essentials of the Christian Faith to his Japanese students.

The treatment is based partly upon the writer's own brief experience as a Christian teacher in Japan, and partly upon a condensed summary of some of the standard and best recent literature bearing upon the questions discussed. At no point is the treatment exhaustive, and here the writer necessarily lays himself most open to criticism for the indiscretion of attempting a brief discussion of subjects which compass nearly the whole field of theological investigation. Only one consideration induced him to attempt this task, which was, the vital need of the Christian layman in Japan of a brief, practical treatment of the main theological postulates to enable him to present Christianity with the broadest and most practical appeal to his Japanese friends.

Numerous references to standard modern literature as quoted from in the text, and a short bibliography at the close, will enable the reader who is dissatisfied with this brief treatment, to follow out the lines of thought suggested at his leisure.

Especial acknowledgment is due to President Henry C. King of Oberlin College, who kindly suggested much of the bibliography from which the inspiration of this booklet was received.

Nagasaki, Japan, December 8th, 1910.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A Working Theology for a Christian Teacher in Japan.

Chapter One. The Problem Stated.

Probably there was never a time when men were less interested in Theology and at the same time more interested in Religion, than the present. Theology is so largely the development of the thinking of the Church in past centuries upon problems of creed that have ceased to play a central part in the religious thinking and practice of the present, that it is inevitable that it has lost its grip upon men.

It is the misfortune of theology that it has the tendency to perpetuate itself in fixed statements and expressions that have had the sanction of antiquity. Religion, on the other hand, being pre-eminently a matter of the heart, has eluded this sterilizing process, and following man through each step of his progress, presses warm and pulsing with life to the very threshold of the modern stage. The modern church finds itself in the embarrassing position of having to reconcile the worn-out statements of Ecumenical Councils concerning theological problems, with the demands of the present for a vital, practical religion. In so far as she identifies dogma and religion, she signally fails; in so far as she gives to pure religion the central place of her activities and makes theology minister to the highest and most concrete expression of that religion, she brilliantly succeeds and becomes a dynamic power in modern life.

This is pre-eminently such a practical age, an age that is so living and working and thinking in concrete, scientific terms, that it is inclined to give short shrift to a religion of dogmas that seem to terminate chiefly in speculation. All doctrine must have meaning for life if it is to get hold of men: not life in the abstract or in the future or seen from the philosopher's study window, but the life of the wonderful, teeming, strenuous present; the present with its thronging opportunities, its heavy tasks, its biting heart-aches and its noble joys.

As King says, "Religion must be seen to bear on life,—something must follow from it for attitude and conduct."* "Religion is a deed," says Lotze.† When conduct is separated from it in thought or practice, the moral life dies and religion becomes a farce.

Nowadays there is abundant demand for religion, but it is a religion of the street. The modern man does not deny the possibility of a sovereign God, who as Ruler of the Universe is seated on his throne in the Heavens, infinite in power and knowledge and majesty; he does not deny him,—he will have nothing to do with him. He is as far removed from such a God in terms of thinking as of practice, for the world has long been too busy to trouble itself with questions involved in such an abstract idea. But the man of the street is, to-day, intensely interested in the God of the street; a God who is not above taking off his royal garments, nor finds it inconsistent with his dignity to enter the dust and dirt of the workshops and there hold vital communion with men. As some one has well said, "The Devil may be a gentleman, as literature often portrays him, but the almighty God cannot be one if he is to do the work that the modern world demands of Him."

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* Reconstruction in Theology, p. 183.

† Quoted by King, Op. cit., p. 204.

Now it is because most of the old theological statements are too hopelessly belated in expression to meet this wide-spread demand for a workaday religion, because they leave the average man with a sense of bewilderment and unreality, that we find them one by one abandoned for more serviceable expressions of faith.

But for all these patent facts, we cannot abandon theology as either false or worthless. As a method it may have become antiquated, but its subject matter can never die, for it deals with the essence of vital religion. So in accord with the modern spirit men have attempted the task of reconstructing theology and of making it interpret for them more really the eternal verities of Christian experience and belief. This process has gone on with great vigor for several decades, until it is probably not overstating the truth to say that the average modern religious student is further removed in his thinking from his immediate predecessor of one generation back, than that man's outlook differed from the early Church Fathers.

Now a working theology, to deserve the name, must not only prove to be a satisfactory theological equipment with which the average man may do religious work, but it must be one that works, that is, one that is fundamentally in accord with the demands of reason and of science, as well as of the heart and faith. If the old theological statements contain postulates and dogmas that are obscure and do not get home to the needs of the work-a-day faith of the average man, they must either be re-stated or dropped out, and the emphasis placed upon points which are understood by a majority to have a central and vital bearing upon the religious life.

Therefore a working theology should deal with the fewest possible subjects consistent with a vital and saving presentation of Christianity.

A working theology for Japan must bear most effectively on the Japanese mind and temperament, as related to and as developed by its religions, social customs, folk-lore and traditions,

In certain important respects, the educated classes of the nation have taken their cue, in trend of thought and reasoning, from the advanced scientific movements of the West, and tendencies and theories are transplanted with amazing rapidity from their home soil to Japanese shores.

Still further, the Japanese is naturally a thorough-going Higher Critic. He has rebuilt his whole national life on the basis of the most approved modern principles, and in so doing has ruthlessly trodden down many of the old sanctions and ideals that did not square up to the demands of science.

He has a strong suspicion that whatever is handed him out of the past, at least if dressed in old clothes, is necessarily antiquated, if not absolutely worthless. For these reasons the appeal to antiquity and even to history is highly discounted. Modern Japan harbors a strange mixture of beliefs and tendencies. Every shade and stripe of unbelief may be found—skepticism, agnosticism, materialism and atheism, rung through all their changes, each dressed in the garments of science, and all together contending stubbornly with the old polytheistic and pantheistic faiths as well as with Christianity. Dr. Imbrie tells us that the real conflict that Christianity has before it in Japan, is essentially the same which it has to wage in Europe and America:—Theism vs. pantheism and agnosticism, and the Christianity of the New Testament, vs. the Christianity that reads into or out of the New Testament anything it pleases.*

On the other hand there is a growing recognition on the part of some of Japan's most astute statesmen and educators, that the nation is in the perilous position of having cut loose from the mooring of her ancient moral sanctions without having anchored to any adequate substitute. Japan is adrift upon a current which is sweeping with appalling power and rapidity toward the shoals of moral disintegration and disaster.

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* Edinburgh Missionary Conference. Report of Commission IV., Section, "Japan."

Not a few of the country's noblest men are deploring the almost total lack of moral training in the educational system of their nation, and are attempting to stem the tide of unbelief and immorality which is flooding the land. Many educators are beginning to see that there can be no adequate basis for teaching or practicing a system of morals aside from religion, while some go so far as to say that the Religion of Christ is the only practical solution of the problem.

Many keen thinkers of this land, while withholding personal allegiance from Christ, are watching the Christian Movement with the warmest interest and sympathy, and partake of the mental attitude of those men of old when they met Jesus on the road to Emmaus:—"We hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel."*

Other considerable factors to reckon with are the lingering spirit of aversion to the foreign faith that still permeates the masses in large sections of the country, and the marked hostility of the military, naval and official classes in general, who see in Christianity a powerful influence, incompatible with the maintenance of that spirit of loyalty and devotion to Emperor and country, which they identify with the soul of the nation.

A working theology for Japan must be one that takes into account these deep prejudices, these unsatisfied longings, these noble traits and marked tendencies. It should be able to adjust the problems of science and religion, it should study the wisest avenues of approach, the lines of least resistance, that it may present Christ as the sufficient and acceptable saviour of this most capable and attractive people, and his gospel as the adequate solvent of the burning social, educational and moral problems of the nation.

It should recognize the transition period of flux and instability of the present, with the resulting priceless opportunity with which Christianity is presented for making good in the eyes

* Luke, 24:21.

of this people, when nearly every door is open, and the nation is self-confessedly in extremis for just the healing that it can bring.

Chapter Two. Science and Religion.

First, a working theology in Japan can neither afford to shut its eyes to the so-called scientific objections to Christianity nor handle these questions with gloves. The man who tells you it never pays to open a philosophical discussion with a Japanese about religion, is stating a convenient working hypothesis, but one that is neither Christian nor fair. It certainly does not pay to meddle with these matters if one has a secret conviction that his faith cannot hold its ground in the face of science, or if a man has a deficient practical knowledge of the questions involved. Christ never hesitated to take up the discussion of difficult problems connected with his life and work where he saw a genuine spirit of inquiry in his interrogator.* Peter tells the Christian to be always able to give a reason for the hope that is in him,† and Paul that we must correct those that oppose themselves to the faith.‡ Certainly to-day, when the philosophy of religion has been as fully developed as we now find it, and the reasonableness of the life of faith is so clearly demonstrable, it is no less than treachery to the flag of our Leader, to refuse to defend his cause with such worthy weapons. Moreover, to a large majority of thinking men, this scientific approach is the only one they hold open for the entrance of spiritual truth, and he deliberately shuts the door of faith in men's faces who refuses to discuss these incomparable questions upon what, to the world, is a reasonable basis.

* Luke 20 : 9-38. John, 8 : 12-59.

† I Peter, 3 : 5.

‡ II Timothy, 2 : 25.

Finally, we owe it to ourselves in the light of clarifying and making more concrete our own faith, to seek for God's last word to men on the unity of all truth, and its deep and essential harmony.

In Japan to-day, the tendency is to lump all religions together as superstitions or myths that have played a useful part, perhaps, in the unscientific past, but which to-day are down and out.

The material is the real and worthful; the spiritual has been relegated to the scrap-heap of worn out commodities.

To such a spirit we must present the thesis that the spiritual is the real, the worthful, the eternal, and that it is not inconsistent with the demands of science.

Johnston Ross, of Cambridge, tells us that the relation of Science to religion comes under four aspects:—First, *Independence*:—If the Scientist has his mass of facts and realities to deal with, so has the religionist. The scientist deals with courses of mechanism and consequences of phenomena. The religionist with origins, purpose and destiny. If the scientist says, "this room was swept with a broom," I am, as a religionist, saying as real a thing, when I say, "This room was swept with a purpose"; or, again, that if a man commits a murder his guilty conscience is as real a thing as the corpse of the man he has murdered. Science itself is showing us more and more the value and claim of the prima facie view of life, and that prima facie view shows us that the materials of religion are as real as the stuff the world is made of.*

Second:—there is a fundamental *comradeship of working between science and religion.* Both are working on an unfinished problem. The religionist has been learning more slowly than the scientist to discard a-priori theories, to go to school to the facts, and to proceed cautiously with generalizations. Before the religionist, no less than the scientist, new areas of fact and

* Religion and Modern Mind, pp. 3-8.

experience are opening up, with regard to which the student has to orientate himself. Both are being educated in the school of awe and wonder at the vastness and complexity of the universe, both feel the breath of a morning of high hope, for the suggestions of a mighty order in the universe are becoming increasingly great.

Third :—is a profound *debtorship on the part of religion to science*. Dr. Gwatkin says, "What we mean by saying that the physical universe is governed by general laws, is that knowledge is impossible unless the whole system is at least a rational unity, whatever else it may be. And this means that if force is its moving power, there must be *one* force and no more : and if God ; there must be *one* God and no more." Science has stated its monodynamism ; theology has overheard and been startled into a new understanding of its own monotheism. The old idea of God is no longer possible. A God who is an absentee from any part of the universe, who hates or despises or forgets anything he has made, is now an impossibility for theology. As Ross says, "we have been rebuked by science *not* for introducing the idea of God, but for being unfaithful to our monotheism, and for not introducing him far enough, and not for thinking with sufficient definiteness of his presence and agency as universal."*

In regard to the bearings of law upon religion we are greatly in debt to science. Science insists upon the divinity of law ; and religion has had to square up to this, and has gained immensely in making our gospel message more robust and virile.

In the realm of progress religion has a vast debt to science. Evolution has revolutionised the presentation of the Christian Religion. It has fundamentally altered our view of the Bible, of the history it contains, of the doctrines it unfolds. It has revived religious historical studies and has suffused history with the providential idea. It has given a new view of the relation

* Ross, "Religionist and Scientist," in "Religion and Modern Mind," pp. 6-16.

of secular to sacred history. It has set Christ in a new light, as the goal and crown of evolutionary process in the history of man.

Finally, *Religion has a great gift for science.* The scientist possesses certain moral experiences which constantly touch questions of origin, purpose, and destiny, and as a scientist he has no materials nor faculty for dealing with these moral experiences. But the exponent of religion has that material in unrivalled richness. The scientist needs religion to relieve spiritual hunger and discontent, to hearten him in the midst of loss of faith in life, to quiet the turbulent moods of spirit which upset the balance of self-poise, to nourish and respond to aspirations to fortify and prepare for judgment, of which the unbeliever has as definite an instinct as the believer, and finally to change into a glad certainty, through Jesus Christ, his hopeful guesses about immortality.*

The birth of natural science, and especially its development has had an immense value for Religion: It has immensely increased respect for experience, emphasized the universality of law and the three-fold restriction on its part to experience, to a mathematical development of its data and to phenomena. In other words, modern science distinctly disclaims to be either a-priori, speculative or ultimate. Modern science has greatly affected the thought and imagination of men in its immense extension of the world in space and the discernment of its laws through astronomy, and in a similar extension of the world in time and the discernment of its laws through both astronomy and geology. These contributions have had much to do with the reconstruction of religious thinking and belief in the nature and purpose of God. Thus has come about Christianity's latent recognition of law, conditions and time in the moral and spiritual life as truly as any other sphere.†

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* Ross, "Religion and Modern Mind," p. 16.

† King, "Reconstruction in Theology," p. 43.

Our trust in religious belief is justified in the same general way in which scientific hypotheses are justified: it stands the test of usefulness. It *works*; it ministers to human needs; it combines harmoniously on the whole with human experience, and it furthers human life and happiness.

This is the same general verification to be found in science, and though in the case of religion the verification is much less exact and complete, it is essentially of the same nature and is sufficient to justify our trust until positively overthrown. For although the beliefs of religion are as yet only partially verified, that is what one must expect from the enormous magnitude and complexity of religion's problem; and it must be remembered too that the relatively simple "laws" and "truths" of science, now universally accepted, were one day in the same position and started out as mere postulates. Science, too, takes risks, as Schiller says, and ventures herself on postulates, hypotheses, and analogies, which seem wild, until they are tamed to our service and confirmed in their allegiance. She, too, must end by saying, "Credo ut intellegam," and she does this because she must. For as Professor Dewey has admirably shown, all values and meanings rest on beliefs, and we cannot preserve significance and decline the personal attitude in which it is inscribed and operative. . . ." We start then always from the postulates of faith and transmute them, slowly, into axioms of reason. The presuppositions of scientific knowledge and religious faith are the same."*

Take for instance the assumption that the world is a knowable cosmos. Is this proved? Certainly not, nor can it be until every thing is known: until then it always remains possible that the world may not really turn out knowable at the last. Can we avoid assuming it? Certainly not; without it we could not take a single step towards any science or practice. We simply must assume that the world is an intelligible world, if

* Schiller, "Studies in Humanism," pp. 361-362.

we are to live in it. As a matter of fact we do assume it, all except a few who bury their dissent in the seclusion of the madhouse. Is the assumption confirmed? Yes, in the only way in which such fundamental assumptions are ever confirmed: —the further we trust it the more we know, the more confident in it we grow.

The assumption of a moral cosmos is made and confirmed in the same way. We cannot prove it to be correct so long as the world is not morally perfect; we cannot wholly exorcise the recurrent dread that, after all, the moral order may of a sudden lapse into chaos before our eyes, but we cannot organize our moral experience without this assumption, and in the course of moral development our confidence grows in it.*

Chapter Three. Agnosticism, Materialism and Faith.

What shall we do when faced with the agnostic or materialist who scoffs at the theistic and idealistic beliefs. Such men as P. Carnegie Simpson and President King, tell us that agnosticism and materialism as positive philosophical theories have died out.† Men still say that they do not know about God, but to assert that God cannot be known, is to contradict agnosticism and modern science itself. For although we know only in relation, this position would be to state that we know something that is not relative. If God were the utterly unknowable that agnosticism affirms, then we should be unconscious of his existence and if our knowledge be entirely limited by relativity, we should not be conscious of that limit.

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* Schiller, "Philosophical Essays," p. 262.

† St. Ninian Lectures, p. 219. Reconstruction in Theology, p. 232.

Thus it claims that the Absolute is unknowable, yet we know it is unknowable: to think is to condition, yet we think of the unconditioned.

Though as positive doctrine, Spencer's theory of God as unknowable, once extremely popular in Japan, has been passed by, still as a method it holds on in the minds of many. Huxley made the first application of agnosticism as a method of testing knowledge.

For Huxley and his followers, this meant the strict limitation of belief to what is demonstrated by actual evidence, and from this follows the necessity of dismissing all prejudices, either affirmations or denials, which interfere with this intellectual rule. Thus all belief in that which is more than empirical or beyond phenomena is rejected. However, as we have just seen, science exists upon the basis that nature will be found to be a cosmos, an absolutely undemonstrable assumption, outside of all sense perception, and hence based upon an act of faith. As Simpson says, "In religion the apostle tells us that the just shall live by faith, but in science a man must live by faith whether he be just or unjust, or even if he be an agnostic."*

We are told by an eminent man of science to dismiss all that is not demonstrable by reason in empirical experience, but the very basis of science is not so demonstrable. If then science must, as an act of faith, assume the rational trustworthiness of the universe, why should we stop here? Why not on the same basis assume the moral trustworthiness of the universe, which is just what religion does when it asks us to believe in God.† The writer to the Hebrews gives an admirable definition of faith, which is equally applicable to the scientist or the religionist:— "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."‡

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* Religion and Modern Mind, p. 223.

† Op. cit. p. 224.

‡ Hebrews, XI. 1.

We get light on the problem under discussion, when we apply this agnostic rule of reason, for example, to the question of the divinity of Christ.

The great difficulty for belief has been, not in the sufficiency of the historical evidence, but the incredibility of the idea that God should appear in the person of a Galilean peasant. That is the real difficulty, but agnosticism tells us to dismiss it. The question is not one of a-priori likelihood or even credibility: it is one of evidence, of investigating the facts of history, of Christian experience and of Christ's power in the world to-day.

It is the unprejudiced, impartial, earnest study of the facts of Jesus Christ, which Christianity has a right to ask from all men, and especially from the agnostic. "The empirical spirit, which says 'come and see,' is the immense contribution of agnosticism to the Christian faith."*

Spencerian philosophy has long been on the wane in this country. Its place, however, has been taken by an even greater foe to faith, because of its accord with the immense materialistic development of the nation, and the spirit that has engendered, and because it does not demand a subtle philosophy to defend its principle positions.

Crass materialism is the unknown God which has taken captive the thinking people of Japan, and to whom altars are raised in every government school and centre of thought, of industry and of trade throughout the empire.

As a philosophical theory materialism may be found to collapse no less than agnosticism, while as a practical working principle, sufficient to meet the problems and demands of every-day life, it can not stand the first test of efficiency. The great fact on which every theory of materialism breaks, is the fact of consciousness. Life unattended by sensation presents a great enough difficulty to him who would explain all on

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* P. C. Simpson, Religion and Modern Mind, p. 227.

mechanical grounds, but when consciousness enters, the difficulty becomes insuperable.* Thus the first problem which materialism cannot solve, is that of accounting for the phenomena of consciousness in consistency with the law of the conservation of energy. If mental phenomena are produced by material causes, if for example, the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile, it can only be at the expense of some measure of energy. But what becomes of this energy thus produced? According to Science it cannot disappear, but must be accounted for within the physical circuit.† However this is just what does not happen. This new created force does disappear into a world which materialism cannot explain, in the form of volition, memory, and various forms of mental and purely spiritual activity which never again, in many cases, enter the physical circuit, but are transmitted at once and lost in a field unknown to the laws of science.

Thus there is a constant leakage or surplusage of energy transformed into self-consciousness, which the materialist cannot account for, and which can only be accounted for on the basis of a spiritual force.

The second point of collapse of materialism, is the impossibility of establishing any law of succession in the relation between the two groups of phenomena. Huxley claimed that the mental order was completely determined by the physical, while on the other hand consciousness did not have the slightest influence on the physical series.§ The world of science has, however, advanced immensely in this particular field of investigation since the great English naturalist was its chief exponent. Although the essential unity

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* Du Bois-Reymond. Die Sieben Welt Rätzel. Quoted in Bettax, Science and Christianity, p. 202.

† Du Bois-Reymond. Ueber die grenzen des Natur Kennens, p. 28 in Orr's "Christian View of God and the world" p. 148.

§ Quoted by Orr, op. cit. p. 148.

of man has been established in a remarkable degree by experimental psychology, the dependence of the spiritual series upon the physical has not been established and the trend of evidence is all the other way. The two series are distinct and made of a different stuff. "To maintain that the physical laws are so adjusted as to turn out a product exactly parallel to the steps of a rational demonstration in consciousness, is in itself an assumption of design in creation so stupendous as to over-top all other proofs of teleology"* and which the materialist would be the last man to maintain.

The third point at which the materialistic hypothesis breaks down is its irreconcilability with what is implied in self-consciousness and in moral freedom. To establish self-consciousness it is not enough that there be a succession of feelings, separate impressions and sensations, it is essential that there be a central principle that apprehends these impressions and relates them to one another and to itself, a principle that remains identical through the changes and is conscious of its self-identity. It is only through such a persistent identical self that knowledge or thought is possible to us. Were we simply a part of the stream of consciousness we could not be aware of it.† Materialism cannot account for what James calls "the me as knower, the I."‡

Finally the consciousness of moral freedom is inexplicable on the basis of mechanical conditions. Materialism is the denial of moral freedom or freedom of any kind, and with it as the working hypothesis of life, moral life would disappear.§

In its utter failure to stand the test of a practical working principle in the face of the actual needs and problems of human life, we find the final and most sweeping indictment against materialism.

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* Orr, op. cit. p. 149.

† Lotze, Microcosmos, p. 157.

‡ James, Psychology, p. 176.

§ Orr, Christian view of God and world, p. 150.

This, in short, the test of pragmatism, becomes the test which appeals to the common sense judgment of mankind. The question asked of materialism becomes, what, granted that you are true, can you do for the satisfaction and betterment of the human race? At what point can you lift men to clearer vision and to nobler living than if you had never been? In modern parlance the query would be, "can you, provided you are given a fair field, deliver the goods to mankind"? Where unbelief has said, "I can accept only that which is demonstrable by actual experience," pragmatism answers, "Very well, but experience shall be the test of the value of your unbelief."

Materialism stands dumb and helpless when faced with the vital questions of life. The eternal, spiritual verities, faith, hope and love, find no place in her system and so remain inexplicable mysteries. Faith, the materialist discounts although the first link in his chain of causation hangs in the air depending on pure belief. Scoffing at the biblical statement that faith can remove mountains, he is blind to the fact that it is the force which has moved the world, and is moving it to-day in every line of human achievement. Hope has no place in the materialistic vocabulary, for the system knows no hope. It is essentially pessimistic, and its fitting motto is that which Dante puts over the entrance to the lower world, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here." Materialism cannot give one optimistic word to man concerning those questions which most vitally affect him. Love is equally without the materialist's recognition. He dismisses it as a chemical affinity or molecular attraction; he reduces it to a formula of the laboratory and snaps his fingers at the greatest spiritual asset of history and of mankind.*

Materialism cannot explain the origin of life or what life itself is. Haeckel, probably the greatest modern German materialist, makes the grave assertion, that unless we postulate

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* Cf. Bettex, Science and Christianity, pp. 297, 301.

the origin of life in the as yet unproved theory of spontaneous generation, we are forced to the assumption of a supernatural creation.* Nor can the phenomena of death find any surer treatment at the hands of materialism. It remains the riddle it has always been from the standpoint of science.

But though it might be natural to expect that in the spiritual field, whose reality it denies, materialism should collapse as a working theory, can we not rightly demand that in its own sphere of material phenomena, this iron system of mechanism should substantiate its claims. Pressing this system back into its own field, we find that it fights a losing battle. The two main articles in its creed, upon which all else rests, are pure assumptions of faith and can in no way be verified by the only law which science knows, the empirical test. The materialist says "I believe in the eternity of matter." However, he cannot define the phenomena of which he speaks, and how can the eternity of something whose very nature we do not know be affirmed, much less proved.† The second article in this statement of belief, leads upon as thin ice as the first, "I believe in the eternity of force," and like the first, dealing with that to which our experience is purely relative, becomes equally unverifiable. So eventually the materialist must be placed alongside of the agnostic under the category of those who live by faith.

James says, "Materialism and Theism, so indifferent when taken retrospectively point, when we take them prospectively, to wholly different outlooks of experience. For according to the theory of evolution, the laws of the redistribution of matter and

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* Haeckel, Natürliche Schöpfungs geschichte.

† Cf. Bettex, Op cit. p 268.

of motion . . . . are fatally certain to undo their work again and to redissolve everything that they once evolved."*

Balfour, in his "Foundations of Belief," gives a striking picture of the outcome of life from the materialistic standpoint:—"The energies of our system will decay, the glory of the sun will be dimmed, and the earth, tideless and inert, will no longer tolerate the race which for a moment disturbed its solitude. Man will go down into the pit and all his thoughts will perish. . . . . Matter will know itself no longer. 'Imperishable monuments' and 'immortal deeds,' life itself and love stronger than death, will be as if they had not been, nor will anything that is be better or be worse for all that labor, genius, devotion and suffering that have striven through countless ages to effect."† James continues: "That is the sting of it, that in the vast driftings of the cosmic weather, though many a jewelled shore appears, and many an enchanted cloud-bank floats away, long lingering ere it be dissolved, yet when these transient products are gone, nothing, absolutely nothing remains to represent those particular qualities, those elements of preciousness which they have enshrined. Dead and gone are they, gone utterly from the very sphere and room of being. Without an echo, without a memory, without an influence on aught that may come after, to make it care for similar ideals.

"This utter, final wreck and tragedy is of the essence of scientific materialism, as at present understood. The lower and not the higher forces are the eternal forces, or the last surviving forces, within the only cycle of evolution that we can definitely see."‡

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* James, Pragmatism, p. 103.

† Balfour, Foundations of Belief, p. 30.

‡ James, Pragmatism, p. 105.

Chapter Four. Comparative Religions and the Religion of Jesus.

The science of Comparative Religions, young as it is, has already given brilliant and very important results, which no Christian teacher in the Far East should ignore or fail to clearly understand.

Foremost among these results, it has proven past all possible refutal, that religion is a universal phenomenon. No race or tribe of men that has come under the observation of science, but has been found to have some cult or ritual or belief that stood for it as religion. Even so far back as the stone age, wherever man has left memorials of himself, among these are clear indications of religious belief.

The next service that this study gives, is to show that in the religious sphere, as in every other, there has been a steady progress from lower to higher forms. On the whole, wherever religion has had a fair field, it has shown itself able to shake itself free from lower things and to rise to more spiritual heights. Again, the study of Comparative Religions is able to prove that there are elements of truth that lie behind the mass of grotesque and disgusting superstitions which mark some of the lowest cults. Moreover, that at low stages in man's development, it has been just these grotesque and grovelling customs that have made for social and spiritual development in the long run. For example the system of tabus and the various animistic theories of the universe have worked steadily toward ideas of the ethical and the spiritual.*

* Canon Macculloch, Religion and Modern Mind, p. 72.

This same science helps us to correctly estimate what are to be the permanent elements in religion. Those things that are common to all religions, we may assume to have a vital place in ultimate religious truth.

If we see that these common elements exactly correspond to man's needs and aspirations, that these have been the elements that have lifted man, and if we see further that any one religion contains all of these elements, in a comparatively pure form, and that it is adapted to all sorts of men, in all ages and places, we may believe that we have reached the final form of religion.* Now this is exactly what comparative religion has discovered in the religion of Jesus Christ, and having discovered it through the scientific approach, it has a most vital bearing upon the modern mind in its attitude toward faith.

By no means least of the achievements of this oft misunderstood field of research, is that it has, by showing the common elements of the great ethnic faiths, and by stimulating a careful study of the principles and beliefs of each, made the different camps of the religious world more tolerant of each other.

Thus the spirit of modern Christianity asserts that all religions, in so far as they serve as vehicles of spiritual truth, are revelations from God. Christianity does not present itself as the only revelation, but as the completing revelation, which gathers into itself the truth that is in all others and rounds it out and completes it. As in the olden time, Christ took a far from hostile attitude toward the very imperfect system of the Mosaic law, and filled in its great gaps with the full revelation of God that he brought, so we can but find Christ fulfilling and completing these legal systems of the ancient East, and

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* Op. cit. p. 73.

acknowledging truth, wherever found, as a divine gift from his Father.*

No one can say that heathendom is without God. The God who reveals himself in Christianity must have been seeking to reveal himself in Buddha. All men have religions and all religions are from God, for "in the generations gone by . . . . He left not himself without witness."†

The only two religions that lay any claim to being the universal or final religion, beside Christianity, are Mohammedanism and Buddhism. We may eliminate Mohammedanism, at once, from the discussion, since it owes all that is best in it to Judaism and Christianity, and has long since wrecked itself upon the principles of its own holy book, the Koran.

Buddhism started with noble conceptions, but it lacks the redemptive power, the resurrective element that marks Christianity. Buddha suffered with the world; Christ suffered for the world. Buddha sought salvation in an escape from consciousness which finally destroys the soul, Christ teaches that salvation is the rebirth of the soul into his own image, with the purpose of man's becoming a son of God. Buddha teaches moral conduct, but leaves men to fight these problems out in the dark alone; Christ sets up moral ideals of the highest possible kind and yet gives abundant power to the man who would reach them.‡

It is in the development of a progressive morality and the building of a noble and complete personality, that Buddhism falls short.

It is of value to note at this point, that just as the Pragmatic philosophy handles the question of materialism vs. faith, so it

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* Matt. V. 17.

† Acts, XIV. 17.

‡ Horton, My Belief, Chap. II.

handles Buddhism or any other religion as compared with Christianity. What can Buddhism show, after twenty-five centuries, as its practical results? What is it doing to-day, and what can it do at its best? The Japan Times, edited by Japanese, in its issue of September 3rd, 1910, gives a frank answer.

It says, in speaking of the proposed program of Buddhist expansion in Korea: ". . . . It is extremely doubtful that the Buddhist religion, or the grossly unphilosophical and superstitious part of it, which alone can be taught by the average priests, will do any good to the Koreans. . . . . The case would be different if Buddhism, however degraded in its form now, has been in any way helpful in bringing about the modern civilization of Japan. But whatever pretensions it may set forth in other directions, it certainly and absolutely has no claim to make in this particular respect, that is, in the work of the moral, intellectual and social elevation of new Japan."

The same test applied to Confucianism shows us that in spite of certain high ethical teachings, some of which have done good service in setting ethical standards, in general its practical result has been to petrify four hundred millions of people in the attitude of looking backward.

But what should be the attitude of the Christian teacher toward these alien religions. First, it should be one of profound respect. Courtesy to the people among whom we are living, must beget a reverence for the beliefs that are most intimately connected with their art, history and lore, while no student of history can withhold admiration for the founders of these faiths, and the marvellous statements of truth which they impressed upon men by their personalities and teachings.

When I think of Confucius, that gra old man of China, who by the nobility of his life and the purity of his teaching, has

been the ideal of ethical conduct of three great nations for over two thousand years; when I study the life of renunciation led by Gautama, and the way in which the system he founded has gripped half the human race in its power for an equal period of time, however these systems may have broken down, I must believe that here we are standing in the presence of God-given leaders of humanity.* However fitful and imperfect the light shed by the torches of these men, however near to extinction they come to-day, when met by the sun-blaze of the truth of Christ, I must believe that those torches were originally lit at the altar of divine fire.

Let us not be misunderstood here. Though imposing the personalities of Gautama and Confucius may be, though noble the truths they promulgated, we can find no trace of divinity in the men. They were great teachers, with striking power to impress their fellows, but none of them have been incarnated in the truth that they taught, and none have transmitted to their followers the power to attain to their high ideals. They were men, and with them died the regenerative power needed to make their systems a permanent and vital redemptive factor in the life of mankind.

In the second place, we may freely admit the truth that we find in these religions, and give it the credit of its intrinsic value. In so doing we do not weaken, but rather build up the foundations of our own faith, for the higher the theoretic ideals of Confucius and Buddha, the more do their inadequacy as systems appear, when put to the practical test of religious efficiency and power. Again we may find in these religions much valuable material that may be used as helps to the understanding of Christianity and preparation for its doctrines.

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* Underwood, Religions of Eastern Asia, p. 176.

In Buddhism we find the dim idea of a Supreme Being in "Amida," in Shinto in "Kami," and in Confucius in "Ten." Shinto seems to give a clearer idea of a personal God than any other religion of the East, it also emphasizes the importance of purity, which though largely in the physical sphere, may be made the basis of spiritual teaching. Perhaps the most significant teaching of Shinto as related to Christianity, is the conception of the Japanese that they are sons of the gods, and so partakers of the divine nature. It is a natural step from this noble idea to that of sonship of the one God.

There are at least three doctrines in Buddhism, as held in Japan, that seem to prepare the way for Christianity. First, the belief in a future life. The survival of the individual person is theoretically denied, but practically admitted in every day life. Second, the law of causality. Reward and punishment are recognized as consequences of good or evil action, and so a basis is laid for ethical religion. Third, the idea of salvation. This has been developed especially by the Shin sect of Buddhists, which teaches the saving vow of Amida. Though this is considered more as a deliverance from physical suffering than from sin still it is a stepping-stone to the salvation through faith in Christ.*

Confucius' teaching reaches a high level of ethics, but it lacks the altruistic spirit and is self-centered. There is no question but that the Confucian ideal of the superior man and his high virtues has had a profound influence in moulding Japanese character and in developing the spirit of bushido.† This spirit of chivalry, as seen in devotion to feudal lord, to country and to Emperor is possibly the most determinative trait of the nation. The appeal to loyalty, to personal devotion, meets with a passionate response,

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* Edinburgh Missionary Conference. Commission IV., Article "Japan."

† Underwood, op. cit. p. 173.

somewhat different in kind from that known in the west. This strong instinct is a legitimate door of appeal in presenting the claims of Christ as Lord of Lords. These superior traits need but to be spiritualized and given the divine sanction through the touch of Christ, to be made the basis of a noble type of Christian character.

The third point in the attitude of the Christian teacher in Japan toward the national religions, is a thorough acquaintance with their working principles. This is of vital importance, first to win the respect of the people and their sympathetic hearing of the new message. Such an attitude disarms prejudice, precludes the possibility of being considered narrow or bigoted, and pays a marked compliment to those who are considerate enough to listen to what the foreigner has to say.

Again there is no quicker road to a knowledge of the mind and character of this nation and the subtle spiritual forces that permeate large sections of society, than to gain a proper estimate of the religious atmosphere and movements which have played a remarkable part in shaping the Japanese character.

Finally, to successfully meet these religions in the open field of competition, and to show men how and at what points the gospel of Christ is superior to their own faith, such a knowledge is important. The secret of Paul's superb success in winning Jews to faith in Christ, lay to a large extent in his intimate knowledge of Jewish history, prophecy and religious temperament, and his ability to bring argument to bear upon the most vulnerable points in the Jews' defence.*

What are the preeminent points in the religion of Jesus Christ that we may stand upon as firm foundation in meeting these other systems.

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* Acts, Chap. XIII, 17-41 etc.

First, in accord with the pragmatic argument, is the fact that along the line of Christianity, the greatest results have been accomplished, and the noblest impetus toward mankind's regeneration and development is found. Not only in the case of nations and institutions, but with individuals this is true. Gordon Clark says, "The best religion is that which makes the best men, which by restraining the bodily passions, vitalizing the mind, moralizing the life, and lifting the soul into tender communion with God, makes a noble man. No religion has done this so effectively as the religion of Jesus."* Striking and independent witness to the truth of this argument, is made by Rev. Uchimura, a prominent pastor of Tokyo. After spending many months abroad in study and travel, he said, "I can say that I have seen only good men in Christendom. Brave men, righteous men, honest men, are not wanting in heathendom, but I doubt whether good men can be possible without the religion of Jesus Christ to mould them."

In the second place, Christianity is, without question, the most universal religion. It is the only faith that can make good its claim to being the world religion. Christ and his salvation is adapted to all kinds of men, of every grade of intelligence and of social and political status. Christ is as mighty to save to-day, in the face of the most searching attacks of science upon religion, and in the face of the marvellous advances of human intelligence, as he was in the days of the early Church. The religion of the risen Christ is the only religion that to-day has placed its aim at the winning of the whole world, and that in any sense is accomplishing the task.

Christianity, as we have seen, has all the valuable elements of the other best religions. It alone has been able to assimilate

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*St. Ninian Lectures, p. 129.

the best in all other faiths and make them minister to a knowledge of God through Christ.

"Take, for example, the chief idea of Hinduism,—the nothingness of life compared to the infinite existence of God. Christianity recognizes this, but balances it with the idea of the nobility of life as the arena of activity in which evil may be conquered by good. Buddhism lays stress on the need of redemption, but makes it far off and impracticable. Christ brings redemption near to every human being. Confucianism is dominated by the conception of a moral life rather than a spiritual ideal. Christianity is also a system of ethics, but it tells us that morality must have a spiritual basis, which springs from unselfish love of God. The religion of Persia looked upon life as the scene of a great struggle between evil and good. Christ calls his disciples also to a conflict, but he taught the true nature of sin, and showed how every son of God by taking up his cross daily, could overcome sin and thereby help to bring the Kingdom of God."*

So we may go through the list of religions and see how Christ takes up the leading thought of each and glorifies it and gives it a place in his system.

Finally, Christianity is the only religion that gives sufficient motive power for reaching its ideals. All other religions hopelessly break down at this point. The two great problems of every religion worthy of the name, are the problem of overcoming suffering and sin, and the problem of finding God. Christ solved the first problem for all time, by his incarnation as man and by his death and resurrection. Suffering and pain become glorified in the light of Christ's experience: sin and death are overcome through his life and death of victory. Christianity is supreme in its treatment of the second problem,

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* Canon Macculloch, op. cit. p. 79.

the finding of God. That, after all, is the final, all—including test of any faith,—its ability to establish an intimate communion between men and the personal God. Through the personal saving power and companionship of Jesus Christ, and through the Bible, the Word of God, we meet the central elements of the supremacy of our faith. Other religious masters have lived and taught, but none other who fights the daily fight with men, and walks with them into the valley of the shadow. Other religious books have been written but none other that brings men face to face with the personal God.

Chapter Five. The Existence and Nature of God.

It is President King who says that the Almighty purposely provided that spiritual realities should be impossible of scientific proof, so that He need not force Himself upon the personalities of men.* In thus honoring the personality of man, God gives him to search for these spiritual things by the exercise of his spiritual faculties. It is in this conscious voluntary energizing of the spiritual nature through which man finds God and holds communion with Him.

The man who expects to prove to a certainty God's existence is foredoomed to failure, for he has at the outset separated himself from the sphere in which alone he may find ultimate realization of God.

It is because the world of spiritual realities is for men, after all, the real, the fundamental and the eternal, that the

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* "The Seeming Unreality of the Spiritual Life."

belief in God continues to exist unshaken, and will continue to persist, in spite of the inability of science to fathom it.

When an educated man tells you that he does not believe in God, he usually means that he does not accept or understand the God of revealed and authority religion. Such a deity may neither interest him or make an appeal to his religious instincts, but in a large majority of cases the man has a religion with a God in it, whom he cherishes and dumbly worships within the inmost recesses of his soul. In fact, Dr. Horton goes further and says, that the most sacrilegious and materialistic person has a religion. Often it is a religion without the usual concept of God ; for God it substitutes fate or luck or self-satisfaction, but bad as it is it is a religion with a deity. Horton's definition of Religion, " The conception which we form of the power that is responsible for our being, our relation to that power, and the course of conduct which results from that relation,"* would thus mean that to be without a religion would be to have no conception of the meaning or end of life. Nor does this fact imply, as we have seen, a necessary conflict between science and religious experience.

Fairbairn, in his treatment of Religion in History, gives a more comprehensive, though related, statement of religion. He says, " Religion is the regulation of life through the idea of God."† This is wide enough to cover all forms of religion, from the savage who bribes and threatens his fetish, to John Stuart Mill, who speaking of his wife, said, " Her memory became to me a religion, and her approbation the standard by which, summing up as it did all worthiness, I endeavor to regulate my life."‡ But whatever the nature of the religion followed, it is bound to center around a divinity of some kind, and so a working theology

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* My Belief, Chap. 1.

† Religion in History and Modern Life, p. 90.

‡ Op. cit. p. 84.

must have a clear and adequate idea of the God upon which it stakes its all.

First let us briefly mention the three time-honored proofs of the existence of God. The cosmological proof argues from the finite, conditioned nature of everything in the world, to the existence of an infinite and unconditioned Being. Again, by the temporary succession of effects of the phenomena in the world. Effects depend upon causes. This fact points to a First Cause of the universe. The second of the standard arguments, that from design, or purposiveness of the world, has been rendered invalid in so far as the doctrine of evolution holds, and has been pretty generally abandoned.

The ontological proof has, in its modern form, as stated by Prof. Green, become the basis of rational realism. As such it is accepted by a large school of philosophy, and finds widespread acknowledgment in literature. By it is shown that the existence of an Eternal Reason is proved to be involved in the very act of thinking of this or of any thought. It argues that in the very act of thinking, thought affirms its own existence. But thought can perceive not only its own existence, but the necessity of its existence, and this as the prius of everything else. What is affirmed then, is not simply my thought, but an Absolute Thought, and with this, the existence of an Absolute Thinker.*

The last of the standard proofs of the Divine Being, and the most modern, the moral proof, is largely responsible to Kant for its origin, who develops it in his Critique of Pure Reason. The theoretic proofs do not show us God as a moral being. This we find only in the practical reason which sets before us ends of unconditioned worth, and requires us to regard these as supreme, i.e. to view the world as a moral system, in which natural ends are always subordinated to moral ends. But

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* Orr, Christian View of God and World, p., 95-106.

such a moral teleology is possible only where there is one moral and natural principle of the natural and moral order, and if nature is so conditioned as to secure a final harmony of natural and moral conditions; in other words if the world has a moral as well as an intelligent cause. God therefore is a postulate of Practical Reason. Now moral law is not comprehensible except as the expression of a will entitled to impose its commands upon us. The rules and ideals of conduct, which conscience reveals to us, point to a deeper source in an eternal moral Reason.

The moral consciousness is one of the most powerful direct sources of man's knowledge of God. There grows up within the man—he knows not how—a sense of right and wrong, a law making its presence felt in his life, prescribing to him moral duties, and speaking to him with "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not," in his soul, which he dare not disobey. It is a power, not himself, making for righteousness within him. It is this moral consciousness especially, which safeguards the personality of God.

As to the nature of God, certain natural longings of the soul give us light. The soul as itself personal, demands for the satisfaction of its religious needs a personal object. From whatever source it derives its idea of the Divine, it invariably personalises it. Over against its "I" it seeks a "Thou," and will rest satisfied with nothing else.*

Second, the soul as a thinking spirit, demands an infinite object. Hegel tells us that the deepest ground of man's capacity for religion is the possession of the power of thought. It is this that leads us to negate the limits of the finite. It is that which impels man from fact to principle, from law to wider law. It is the element of boundlessness of imagination, illimitableness of

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* Op. cit. p. 113.

desire, insatiableness of appetite for knowledge, that leads him to modify the idea of the object of religion and bring it into harmony with what is felt an object of worship should be.

Third, the soul as itself ethical, demands an ethical object of worship. It does this in all the higher forms of religion. Even the agnostic—strongly as he protests against the knowableness of God, will be the first to maintain that it is impossible for a God to be false, cruel, tyrannical, revengeful or unjust. He knows enough about God to be sure of that. Fourth. The soul, as itself an intelligence, demands a knowable object. For purposes of religion an unknowable God is no God at all. Religion seeks not only knowledge as its object, but such a knowledge as can be made the basis of communion. By the above tests we see that God is personal, infinite, ethical and knowable and thus answers the demands of the religious spirit.* In Illingworth's "Personality Human and Divine," the argument for the personality of God is strikingly brought out. "The retrospection upon which all modern thinking rests, drives one irresistibly to the conclusion :—that the Power that is responsible for the All, cannot be lower or less than the Ego, at present engaged in thought, which is responsible for a minute part of the whole. Thus, I cannot hesitate to say that the Power is *at the lowest* personal, must have *at least* the qualities of thought, will, and purpose which constitute my own personality, though vastly superior to me."†

God is a spirit; he may be supra-personal, as Paulsen says; he certainly can not be sub-personal. There is therefore no sound reasoning for denying him personal relation with other spirits—direct access to them. We have access to other minds! can it be that he who made them and who knows every avenue of approach to them, has not? We can change the course of life of our fellow

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* Op. cit. p. 113.

† P. 101.

creatures. Is he powerless? Even Pfleiderer can say, "And why should it be less possible for God to enter into loving fellowship with us than for men to do so with each other? I should be inclined to think that he is even more capable of doing so."*

A most fruitful field of study, and one which brings with it the deepest conviction in the belief of the existence of a Personal God, is that of the moral purpose and development of history. There is an undeniable, intelligent movement in it, a sure progress toward a moral goal. No student of history can deny this moral trend. But if this historical principle is moral, it is directed by a being that is personal. Morality has no meaning apart from will, choice, and purpose. There is here a stream of tendency not ourselves which makes for righteousness. (Horton. "My Belief.")

In close connection with this evidence is that witness of the inner life of the best men of all history and every age. This mighty collective witness cannot be ignored. In this vast gallery of experience through which we are permitted to range, we find in every case, witness to One who was for them and is to us the self-revelation of God.

After all is said and done what difference can it make to life, to this present life, whether there is a God or not. To men of all periods the fact of God has stood as the guarantee of the preservation of an eternal moral order. Without such a God in the world, life would be reduced to mere moral anarchy, such as we would experience in the social and economic world were all human government and sanction of law removed.

The idea of God has been always inseparable from man's noblest development and finest work in every line of endeavor, and when you blot out the idea you cut the nerve of his aspiration, his hope and his progress.

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* King, Reconstruction in Theology," p. 71.

In short the idea of God works in the life of man, and will work as long as man continues to be a being endowed with the capacities he has always shown.

As James says, "To say the last word, a world with a God in it, may indeed freeze up or burn, but we even then think of Him as still mindful of the old ideals and sure to bring them elsewhere to fruition; so that where He is tragedy is only provisional and partial, and ship-wreck and dissolution not the absolutely final things. When one bears this belief with him into the dark thicket of life, the darkness becomes light and the unsolveable enigmas and contradictions which vex and sadden us take on a meaning and a purpose that immeasurably ennobles all of life's experiences."*

The concluding and supreme conception of the personal God is that which seeks and knows no better name than that of Father. God as father has been the supreme and ruling conception of Theology, as it was the acme of Christ's self-consciousness, the relationship to God his father. God is no longer onlooker or sovereign merely; but Father, holy and loving, who because he hates sin and knows its awfulness, and yet loves with surpassing tenderness his child, suffers in the sin of his child. It is in this personal conception of the relation between God and man in which religion reaches its highest and most rational development. Fairbairn tells us that it is Christ's conception of God as Father that must be taken as the really ruling conception, determining all else in theology. For the Japanese such a conception is not an easy one to grasp. The idea of personality is greatly obscured, and it becomes of the highest importance for the man who would present this central and ruling conception of our faith in a way which will take hold, to have a strong and clear grasp of the principles which lead up to this conception. Surely among the most rational ways to gain such an understanding of it is to study

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* James, Pragmatism, p. 121.

Christ's self-consciousness and the bearing that that had upon man's relation to God. This is Christ's theology. It erects no altar to an unknown God. It knows one God, the God revealed in Christ, and accepts with confidence the affirmation of Christ, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, how sayest thou then, show us the Father."

Chapter Six. Authority and Inspiration of the Bible.

The Japanese Church opens its doors wide to higher criticism. It was inevitable, with the national temperament, that this should be the case. Japanese pastors and workers are well read and have a good working knowledge of modern movements in theology and philosophy.

Higher criticism is simply the application of the best scholarship to the investigation of the sources and material of scripture. To deny the right of research into this field is to deny the unity of God's law and to fix a deep chasm between religious faith and all else in God's universe.

Higher criticism stands for a method and not results. It gives sound results only when the critic is faced with the facts and uses sound judgment. It is unfair to condemn criticism because some men abuse it as a method. It may be defined as a careful literary and historical study of a book to determine its unity, age, authorship, literary form and reliability.* It is opposed to the a-priori method and so is thoroughly scientific. This movement can not be evaded, it cannot be checked, it can only be intelligently and devoutly cooperated in by all men who desire to see the foundations of our faith made reasonable and sure for the mind of the modern world. George Adam Smith

* King, Reconstruction in Theology, p. 111.

says, "where the faith of one person suffers shipwreck through the employment of higher criticism, the faith of ten is breaking down through lack of the very help it can bring."*

The Catholic principle of authority appeared in the midst of the Reformation, which broke with that very principle only to fix itself upon the Bible as its object in place of the Church. It is of vital importance to note that the first reformers themselves, held no such idea of the infallibility of Scripture, or of the Bible as being more than the vehicle of faith. Luther's battle cry of emancipation from Rome, was "the just shall live by faith," not by the Bible, nor by faith in the infallibility of the Bible, but by faith in Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God. Luther himself was a most active higher critic, classifying the books of the Bible in the order of their reliability, in the order of their helpfulness, and openly questioning the right of some of the books to a place in the canon. Calvin did not attempt by reasonable proofs to justify the authority of the Bible. Rather did he claim that it justified itself to the conscience "for it has within itself the faculty of showing its truth as things white or black of showing their color, or things bitter and sweet of showing their flavour.† It was only when faced with the tremendous attacks of the Papacy and the dangers of internal schism that Protestantism was forced in self-defence to build up the theory of infallibility of scripture as a weapon with which to wage war.‡

It has not been until comparatively recent times that the present canon of scripture has been permanently fixed. It remained for hundreds of years an openly disputed question, which books of the Bible deserved a place in this canon. It is certainly impossible for men to claim external authority for a biblical canon that they have themselves determined.

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* Quoted, op. cit. p. 116.

† Christian Institutes.

‡ cf. Sabatier, Religions of Authority, p. 164.

The whole mission and spirit of Christ is opposed to the principle of external authoritative religion. Priesthood, rites, exterior law, Christ held to be accessories to faith, not the object of faith. He invoked no external sanction. He took no refuge behind Moses' law. His authority was the authority of love and of holiness which shone forth from his person. His authority was the authority of the things he taught, of the Spirit of God which manifested itself in him.* It was this vital spirit of holiness and love that he communicated to his followers, not by written word or canon of scripture, but by the divine impact of his personality. It was this that he was content to leave to his disciples, without the help of written code of law, this inward witness of the Spirit of God as teacher, comforter and friend. That Christ's followers drew up his teaching in narrative form and fixed a canon of scripture was natural and necessary from the human standpoint for the preservation of their religion, but Christ made no provision for such a perpetuation of his teachings and if he had considered such a canon vital to his mission he in some way would have provided for it.

On the other hand, in the Bible we have one of the vital sources of the power and preeminence of the Christian faith. The divine sanction is upon this book, not through the decisions of church or councils, but through the redemptive power which it carries with it. This power is not the book itself, no more than the object of our faith can be the book itself, rather is it the Spirit of God which dwells in the book. Our faith is not fixed upon the external walls of the house, but upon the divine Guest which is sheltered within. The same spirit that produced the Reformation has again arisen and is demanding a transfer of men's belief from the external authority of the Bible to the spiritual authority of Him whom it reveals to men. The final proof of the power and authority of Scripture is what it can do to-day to regenerate

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* Op. cit. pp. 295, 297.

mankind. The Bible must be able to produce its own credentials in terms of present day spiritual efficiency if it is to hold its place in the faith of modern life.

As Foster says, "nothing in the past that is in the past only and not also in the present, saves a human soul to-day."* It is this power to save men to-day wherein lies the real authority of the Bible. This power evades criticism, it is not the object of criticism, and no amount of honest criticism can touch this, which is the essence of our faith. To attest the truth of this statement, one need but ask whether the noble life of Joseph has less influence to inspire men to pure living because the question of the authorship of the book of Genesis is a disputed one. The fact that there may have been two Isaiahs, does not lessen for me the uplift of that marvellous book for my spiritual life. Nor can the disputes, over the preexistence of Christ and the exact way in which he was born as a man, shake my absolute faith in Him who said "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." The reason is simply, that no matter how long criticism may struggle with orthodoxy over these metaphysical and literary questions, Jesus is making good that claim of giving rest to the weary and of saving men through sharing his cross with them. Such criticism cannot touch my faith, for my faith is based upon daily demonstrable experience, which if genuine is an impregnable fortress.

The following positive results of higher criticism for our faith, are well summed up by President King. "It has shown the one great purpose of the Bible to be a record of the historical self-revelation of God to a single people and so to all men, looking always to a winning of men into a character like God's. Secondly, it has brought into clear light the principle of progress in revelation, leading through the work of the prophets to Christ as the absolute standard. Third, is a wonderful unity of

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*Foster. "The Finality of the Christian Religion."

development. The different writers show individual reflections of a religious experience more or less common to all of them. Fourth, this new development has shown us that we cannot use the Bible in the old way as theologians of the past used it. The modern scholar cannot feel free to quote indifferently from any part as having equal authority with every other. Proof texts have gone. We do not for this reason believe the Bible less divine, but find evidence of its divinity in other characteristics and as shown in a different way.

Finally higher criticism for theology, means a restatement of the doctrine of inspiration. Thus we see that the Bible is a record of revelation, rather than the primitive revelation itself, and more a record of what God did than of what he said. The original revelation is in God's actual dealing with men in act. God inspires the life and the experience of the man and the man writes and speaks out of this experience."* That experience, though God-given, is his own necessarily limited by attainments already made and colored by the man's personality. "These writings therefore have no appearance of being divine oracles; they appear as the spontaneous production of a great national literature, born of a profound religious faith, of a powerful common inspiration, but in which the general unity does not exclude a diversity of genius, thought and style, and in which are not lacking side by side with beautiful thoughts and striking truths, imperfections of form, errors in detail, traces of former prejudices and long superannuated methods of exegesis and reasoning."† At no time in God's dealing with men has it been his method to step in and get perfect results. Rather is his method that of patient education, leading humanity by his Spirit, making use of the imperfect human heart and mind as instruments for teaching his will, and by gradual and natural

* Op. cit. pp. 150-156.

† Sabatier, Op. cit. p. 169.

processes lifting men to a closer walk with him. In the progress of such a development was this wonderful literature produced. We must believe that the process is continuous as the growth of humanity in the likeness of God is continuous, and that God's spirit is to-day leading and inspiring and educating men by essentially the same process as in the past.

Finally, then, the proof of the authority and inspiration of our Bible, is the inner witness of the Spirit of God. This method is adequate because it is empirical; in so far as we have experienced the Spirit it is progressive, since it is demonstrable by each succeeding generation of Christians; it is authoritative, in that it bears the sanction of Christ.

Jesus promised to send the Spirit of God to his disciples to bear witness of him, to convict the world in matters of religious experience, and to guide men into all truth.* The record of the Acts shows the fulfilment of this promise,—men teaching and working under the guidance of the Spirit.

This became the great weapon of the Reformers in dealing with Rome,—the right of the individual conscience to the free inner witness of the Spirit.

For Luther the inspiration of Scripture was not an intellectual dogma established before the reading of the books, but a religious fact, a moral conviction created and continuously renewed during the reading by the immediate contact of the conscience with the Word of God. Here was the sphere in which the Spirit did its work; here the source of his faith.†

This same demonstration of the truth of Scripture by the action of the Spirit upon the conscience is also Calvin's source of belief in the Bible. It is that of Zwingli and of every great reformer of that period.

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* John XV, 26. XVI, 8, 13.

† Sabatier, Religions of Authority, p. 174.

As Sabatier says, "there is nothing to oppose to this appeal to experience, to moral and religious evidence. But this evidence, offered by pious souls, is a subjective principle like that of philosophy or morals: it cannot be made the basis of external authority. The authority of Christ and of his words over the conscience is of the same nature as that of God,—inward and moral, and by that very fact sovereign, not the authority of the letter which oppresses and kills, but of the Spirit which makes alive.*

Chapter Seven. The Person and Significance of Jesus.

The problem of the person of Jesus has, by the influence of the critical process, been taken out of the sphere of external objective proof and is now considered on the basis of internal evidence and subjective experience. Although there remains indisputable historical evidence to the fact that Jesus was a man who lived in a definite time and place and performed wonderful works, the final proof of his divinity cannot be built upon the same evidence, but must be transferred to the more intangible field of subjective experience. It is a fact of supreme importance for our faith that this is so, since the former field of evidence, is necessarily open to the technical critic alone, while the latter is one which is eternally open to the humblest child of God, and one in which he may personally test the validity of the claims of Christ. This is an immense gain for the faith of the world.

This study of Christ's person on the basis of internal evidence, has a two-fold aspect,—first that of Christ's own self-consciousness, and second, that of the subjective experience of the individual when faced with the person and power of Christ.

If we can no longer say to an unbeliever, as a final argument, that Jesus is divine because it is so stated in the Gospels,

* Op. cit., pp. 182, 288.

we can at least use the method of Philip when faced with the doubt of Nathaniel, and say, "come and see." When we examine Christ's self-consciousness, we find certain remarkable, outstanding facts:—First, Jesus is a sinless man. Though human and tempted like other men, he never surrenders. He himself claimed to be sinless, and could say "which of you convicteth me of sin."* Christ's prayers and conversation show no sense of sin or need of forgiveness, though he had a keen sense of the wickedness of sin and ability in detecting it in others.

Still more remarkable is the fact that his claim of sinlessness was universally admitted. Though it would have been greatly to the advantage of his enemies, they were never able to find a single fault in him. For nineteen hundred years Christ's claim has been universally allowed. Unbelievers in his divinity freely admit that Christ was without sin. Bronson Alcott once said to Carlyle, that he could honestly use the words of Jesus," I and the Father are one." "Yes," was the crushing reply, "but Jesus got the world to believe him."† Second, Christ maintained that he stood in a unique relation to God and to men. He identified himself with God and at the same time claimed to be the Saviour and Judge of men. He invited the weary to come to him for rest, he spoke of judging all nations from his throne. He made tremendous demands upon his followers, which were not made for the Father or for the Kingdom of God, but for himself. If Socrates or Julius Cæsar had made such claims it would have been put down for insanity, but this Galilean peasant was able to make such demands in a perfectly natural way.‡

Third, Dr. G. J. Romanes says that one of the strongest objective evidences for the divinity of Christ, is the absence, in his teachings of any doctrines which the subsequent growth of human knowledge, has had to discount. This negative argument

* John, VIII, 46.

† Quoted by Dr. Smith, St. Ninian Lectures, p. 167.

‡ Smith, Op. cit. p. 168.

is almost as strong as the positive one from which Christ did teach. No recorded saying of his can pass away in the sense of being untrue or obsolete. When contrasted with the Dialogues of Plato we see an enormous contrast with the Gospels in respect to errors of every kind. So far as the record goes Jesus never said a word that entangled his teachings with the questions of modern science and criticism.*

Fourth, The personality of Christ as evidenced by his words and as portrayed by his biographers, is unique. There is in him a complete absence of distinctively national characteristics, and this though he was born of an intensely nationalistic, exclusive race. If the narrators had given their own idea of a holy man, Christ would have been shown as a Pharisee. Jesus though a Jew owned kinship with all mankind as sons of his Father. He was in a deep sense the Son of Man, and to the wealth of his personality all men irrespective of race or class were irresistibly drawn.

Again, all other great men of history may be analysed and the influences that made them determined, but Jesus defies analysis. As Matthew Arnold said, "We cannot explain him, cannot get behind or above him, cannot command him."†

The above points are based upon no presupposed historicity of the gospel narratives. It is on the basis of a fair scientific examination of them as of any other documents that might come to hand. But on this point of historicity the internal evidence throws much light. The story of Christ is too remarkable to be the invention of any human mind. The most searching criticism that the world has ever known, can find no evidence of fraud or subsequent alteration of the bulk of what Christ is reported to have said. The man to have conceived the picture of Jesus must have been himself divine. It would have needed a Jesus to invent a Jesus, for humanity cannot transcend itself.

* "Thoughts on Religion," p. 157.

† Preface to Literature and Dogma.

Nor can the argument that Christ is a religious genius, preeminent in his department as Michael Angelo and Shakspeare stand in theirs, be maintained. Evolution tells us that the perfect man should appear late in the development of the race. Christ came nineteen centuries ago in the midst of a decadent period and race. Other masters have rivalled Angelo and Shakspeare in their fields. None has rivalled Christ in his. He stands alone and those whose lives approach most nearly to him in holiness are the first to acknowledge him Master and Lord.*

On the other hand the subjective experience of the individual when presented with the person and power of Christ, leads to an even deeper and more satisfying conviction that Jesus is divine. As Dr. Horton says, "We come to this belief as the first believers did, not by taking the abstract idea of deity and asserting by a tour de force that he is divine, but by coming into his presence, and through knowing him to the idea of divinity. We find him divine because he has brought us to God. We believe in him, his life, his death, his teachings, his promises. He draws us, he commands us, by faith in him we are conscious of reconciliation with God, we find that we are new creatures. He is our Judge and our lives are responsible to him and stand and fall according to his view of them. We find that we cannot distinguish in any real sense between this figure and the unseen God. Thus we are led to the conviction that for us Jesus has the value of God, in contact with him we touch God."†

Jesus Christ is the supreme manifestation of God to men, and this is the secret of his sovereign power as the conqueror of men's hearts. When confronted with the fact of Christ men feel at once the power of an authority in accordance to which they must shape their lives. That authority is the divine authority of holiness

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* Smith, Op. cit. p. 176.

† My Belief, Chap. V.

and love outshining from Christ's person, the reflection of the presence of God within him. This power then which through the Person of Christ subjugates our souls, is the authority of God himself. As Sabatier says, "The consciousness of Jesus realizes and includes for us the spiritual bond between the human soul and God, so that when this consciousness becomes ours, we feel ourselves to be in normal and eternal relations with God. . . To be a Christian, is not to acquire a notion of God, or an abstract doctrine of his paternal love: it is to live over within ourselves, the inner, spiritual life of Christ, and by the union of our heart with his to feel in ourselves the presence of the Father, just as Christ did. Christ is far more than the highest authority in Christianity: he is Christianity itself."*

Chapter Eight. The Work of Christ.

The purpose of Christ's mission was to bring about a reconciliation between men and God, their Father, from whom they had separated themselves by sin. The accomplishment of this purpose involved two distinct and yet inseparable tasks,—the showing of God's true character and will to men, so that they would voluntarily seek Him, and second the definite handling of the problem of sin.

In the accomplishment of the first task, Jesus presented as his thesis, himself. From him radiated the holiness, the love, the power of God. Through the marvellous attraction and compelling power of his personality, the tenderness of his compassion, his freedom from sin, his transcendent, yet simple, system of ethics, he showed men what kind of a Person their God

* Religions of Authority, p. 293.

might be. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."* Christ's purpose was to pass on to his disciples this divine nature, or at least to create in them a deathless craving for it. To kindle in men this flame of holy desire, to give them a glimpse of the face of the God whom they had long lost sight of through sin, and to place them on a basis of communion with Him, he became a man.

The sovereign God on high men might not understand, but God revealed in Jesus, in terms of personality and friendship and beautiful character and holy compassionate deeds, and strong pure manhood and conquering power, was a gospel that bore its own appeal.

In seeing and hearing Christ, men were instantly struck with the new fact that they were in contact with a power and holiness and love, that was more than man, and with this came the wonderful conviction that this power and holiness and love were parts of a new experience which might become their own. It was this showing of the true life of God to men and women, and then making comprehensible to them that this life was the natural heritage of men, which it was possible for them to receive, that made up the first part of Jesus' mission.

Thus it came about that men at that time and to-day cannot face Jesus without feeling at once the impelling power of his personality, without at once realizing that they must take a definite attitude toward him and what he stands for. Here we see the sovereign power of Christ. He comes into our presence and when once we have looked into his face, a new standard of self-judgment has been raised, after which the earnest soul can never again feel satisfied with self. If we yield to his gracious authority and follow him, we thereby pass condemnation upon our self,

* John XIV, 9.

with all its unworthiness and sin; the old ego renounces itself and a new ego takes its place. But the new life means the living out in each day of the habit of surrender to the authority of Christ, to which it has surrendered. To the extent of this surrender and self-renunciation, depends the individual's finding God. Hence we find Christ's supreme task that of making reasonable and attractive and compelling the life of God manifested in himself, and of giving men the secret of that life through union with himself.

The great factor standing in the way of this union of men with God, is sin. The object of Christ in relation to sin is to destroy it.* This is the second great angle from which we may view his mission. "Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world," are words that show Christ's confident relation toward this problem of life.†

God as the one holy and pure Being must, of necessity, hate sin and condemn it in the sinner. To forgive a man then, must involve the condemnation of his sin as well as an acceptance of his repentance. In a moral universe sin cannot go unpunished. Here has been the difficulty of the problem of the atonement, the necessity of God's simultaneous forgiveness and condemnation of sin. Sin as such carries with it the death penalty, and if each sinful soul carried in itself the condemnation of sin, then all men would die as paying the penalty of their guilt.

Christ solved the problem, by voluntarily facing death, not that he had deserved, but as the Son of Man, as the type of all men. He understood that it was the Father's will that his life and death were the appointment of the Father's love to men,

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* I John III, 8.

† John XVI, 33.

that sin might be condemned in the flesh. He drank the cup to the dregs, and once and for all bore the condemnation for mankind's sin. This act of Christ was complete and permanent and efficacious, because it was voluntary, it accorded with God's purpose, and Christ was the perfect representative of the race and at the same time God's own representative.

"In the light of this great fact of Christ's death, no one could think that God made light of Sin, for it was initiated by God and bore His approval. But now sin openly condemned once and for all, God could thenceforth freely forgive sinners who accepted the Lordship of Christ and shaped their lives according to his sovereign authority. If men believed in Jesus they would not make light of sin. Forgiveness coming in that way, and at such a price would commit men to hate it and to avoid it. In this way free forgiveness through the cross of Christ would be the overcoming of sin and the destruction of it, and would lead to a life free from sin."* This is why the cross of Christ saves us, and this is why belief in nothing else and no one else can save us from sin and reconcile us to God.

It must be clearly borne in mind that the life and the death of Christ are in no sense distinct experiences. Christ's whole life was vicarious and in a real sense a sacrifice, and his death is but the climax of that vicarious life. Thus apart from accepting the ideals of the life of Jesus, no man can find salvation in his death. The one cannot be fully understood without a personal knowledge of the other. The death gains its power and its meaning from the life and cannot be separated from it. Thus the atoning work of Christ finds its source in his life and its culmination in the cross. It is exactly this experience which Jesus aims to transmit to every son of God. The sacrificial death must follow the

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* Horton, My Belief, Chap. "The Atonement."

vicarious life as the full corn on the ear follows the growth of the blade.

This is what Christ meant when he said that his disciple must take up his cross daily and follow him. Here we find the distinctive power of the Christian faith, that it not only furnishes forgiveness for sin, but it provides the daily power for the daily necessity of overcoming sin. That power is the victorious Christ, who not only places his yoke upon us, but shares in the carrying of it. He puts ideals of surpassing beauty and power before us, but as Lord and Saviour and Friend he bids us come to him and learn of him how to reach those ideals. This is the secret of the *working* of our faith, why it fits into the every-day needs of the everyday man and becomes an ever present and saving reality to him.

Chapter Nine. The Holy Spirit.

Sabatier tells us that in proportion as the Holy Spirit has been insisted on as dogma, and has been made the subject of a metaphysical formula, in that proportion it has fallen from its original high estate, of being the natural result of faith in Christ, as Christ promised it and as the early Christians experienced it. "The Church and Theology have separated inspiration from the Christian life . . . and have forgotten that this gift is organically connected with the faith of all Christians. Thus they have opened a chasm between the apostles . . and all other believers, whom they deprive of what Jesus showed to be the characteristic of the new covenant. In the beginning all believers felt themselves to be inspired."*

* Religions of Authority, p. 305.

One result has been that in all periods of the life of the Church there have been circles of believers who in revolt from this formalizing tendency have tried to imitate the example of the inspired life of the first Christians. These men, in the enthusiasm of their purpose, have made the mistake of all reactionaries, and overlooking the spiritual core of the experience they were seeking, have fastened upon purely accidental and temporary outward manifestations and have made these essential proofs of the Spiritual life. The Montanists of the early church, the AnaBaptists of the Reformation and the Holy Jumpers of modern times, are well known examples of this tendency.

Between the rigid formalism of the Church tradition and this extreme literalism, without question the Holy Spirit has been a blessed and living reality to devout souls in all ages, but there is probably no Christian doctrine upon which men have such widely diverging views. This may be explained because of the essentially subjective principle of the experience of the Spirit. At no other point does God so honor the varying personalities of men. The Apostle Paul, who probably had as sane a conception and as wide an experience of this subject as any leader of the early Church, could say, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit . . but to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit, to profit withal. For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, and to another the word of knowledge . . . to another faith, in the same Spirit; to another gifts of healings, to another workings of miracles, to another prophecy . . . and to another divers kinds of tongues . . . but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit dividing to each severally even as he will."* Thus when you tell me that my original conversion was not sufficient, that I do not show the manifestations of the Spirit, that I need a second

* I Corinthians XII, 4-11.

baptism of the Spirit, I reply that you are dictating terms of operation to the Almighty, that you are belittling the power of God and hampering His omnipotent methods of educating men, through the honoring and exercise of their individual capacities.

It seems reasonably sure, from what we know of God's dealing with men in history and in the individual life, that His way is usually not to limit the revelation of His Spirit to far separated and overwhelming experiences, in the inspiration of which we live for long periods, rather it is a privilege to believe that each morning as I open my heart to Him, His Spirit steals within with new power, to guide and bless and inspire me for the problems and conflict which that day may have in store.

When a man definitely surrenders his life to God, he comes at once into conscious personal relations with him, whose power he thereafter acknowledges, whose guidance he recognizes and whose companionship he begins to crave as a growing experience of blessedness. The Holy Spirit becomes for such a man his sense of God's power in his life, his acceptance of God's guidance and his experience of the divine companionship. Rather than a separate God-head, the Holy Spirit stands for me as God's conscious manifestation of Himself in my life. To restrict this to certain times and certain forms, is to come perilously near to making God the creation of our limited personal experience. Such an idea is too mechanical and opposed to what we know of His methods of training and developing men.

The Christian life is a state of normal growth into the blessed fellowship of God. Led by His Spirit we are given daily lessons in that fellowship, with the purpose that we may grow more and more into His likeness. Thus freed from all sense of strain after spiritual experiences, that may have a meaning for men of different makeup from ourselves, we are led

under the Spirit's guidance to blessings that are fresh every morning and new every evening. With full respect for men of mystic or ecstatic temperament, it can only be under some such calm and inspiring sense of communion with God's spirit, that the average man can find those conditions of soul growth which best develop his powers and unite him to God.

When men stop laying hold upon interpretations of words of Christ and experiences of the first disciples that were the product of special historical and psychological conditions, and try to make such literal interpretation a binding norm of conduct for Christians to-day, when, instead, they catch the eternal spirit of Christ's teaching and its deep harmony with God's universal law of growth, and, with all the Spirit-led common-sense at their disposal, apply it to meet the spiritual needs of the modern man, this much maligned modern man will find that religion has a concrete and irresistible claim upon him.

And so in accord with the words of Christ and with the work of Christ, the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of God—is to day brooding with a great love over the lives of individuals and nations. To the soul that admits Him he becomes a Comforter, Inspirer, Revealer and Simplifier of the deep things of the Kingdom of God. To the soul whom He honors with His presence God speaks in no uncertain tones and becomes an ever-living and present reality. "*Est Deus in nobis.* In the Me there is a mysterious guest, greater than the Me, and to which the Me instinctively addresses its prayer and its trust. What invincible force, what ever renewed energy, what ever upspringing fountain of faith and hope in the Spirit, following upon all disappointments, all defeats."*

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* Sabatier, op. cit. p. 318.

Chapter Ten. Miracles.

The soul of the modern man revolts at the idea of miracle. Miracle as the term is widely understood, means the breaking of natural law. Modern science has fathomed the realm of natural law and has organized all known phenomena within its compass, so men say, therefore a miracle is an impossibility. This very common argument has one weak link in its chain of reasoning, the relativity of human knowledge; the incompleteness of science's laws. A miracle must then, rather be defined, as that which is contrary to what men know of natural law. As King says, "This question is primarily a question of fact, as in the case of all new phenomena. In the case of all asserted discoveries of extraordinary phenomena, we simply ask, 'are these things true?' If they are, then we say, doubtless they are an illustration of a wider law than we have hitherto known. So science had to proceed in the recognition of the facts of organic chemistry and of the Roentgen rays. Just such a process is required in the case of miracles."* Science has no right to a-priori block the way to a careful examination of the facts. Such an attitude, as we have seen, is quite unscientific.

A widening acquaintance of physical and psychic facts is making men more cautious in dogmatising on the impossibility of miracle. Science is constantly running up against stupendous facts and problems which it cannot adequately account for and which point to regions of undiscovered law compared with which all that man has thus far built in to his scheme of knowledge may be but mere child's play. That the ordinary and commonplace of to-day was the miracle of one hundred years ago we need but to think of every-day facts of transportation, communication, manufacture and medical and surgical skill. The human intellect is constantly intruding into the realm of natural law and suspending that law by the application of higher law. From the

* Reconstruction in Theology, p. 62.

standpoint of our great-grandfathers as well as from that of the people whom Christ taught in Galilee, our ability to handle and apply forces of which they were ignorant to the suspending and overruling of forces of which they were familiar is as truly miraculous as anything that Christ performed.

Is it not a tremendous assumption to deny to the Creator and Ruler of the laws of the universe that ability and freedom of handling his own forces and applying his own laws which we handle as our natural right, because perchance we stumbled upon their working in modern times. The fact that man has to organize his experience on the basis of what nature has revealed of herself to him can be no proof that God must organize his experience upon the same limited and partial basis. Any such reasoning is pure anthropomorphism.

Men have come to feel that a miracle is an "isolated wonder" and hence unworthy of the Creator. The difficulty, as King says, lies right at this point. "Huxley asked if any testimony would make it creditable that a centaur had been seen trotting down Regent Street, London. No, probably not; the phenomena is too absolutely without significance or connection with any larger order.

"Nothing could have been more marvellous and opposed to the common human experience than the report that the world revolved around the sun. We, through a long process of education have come to see the reasonableness of it. Such evidence, though logical, is not immediately transferable. A savage, to-day, might successfully challenge us to prove the Copernican theory to his satisfaction. It would involve too much process. This doesn't minimize the value of the evidence, but puts a premium upon scientific education.

"The radical ground for unbelief in any marvel is that it points to nothing, that it stands by itself apart from any order or causation. But the miracles do not stand by themselves; they are profoundly significant; they are a part of a vast and orderly

spiritual movement, and those who have perceived the significance and order of that movement and experienced even in a small degree its causation, have found these things the strongest and most rational evidence of a miraculous dispensation. This cannot be imparted by a brief process to a man destitute of spiritual perception, but that doesn't invalidate the rationality of the evidence, but puts a premium, just where it should be put, on spiritual culture.

"Thus we have no call to defend the 'isolated wonder,' but rather to assert our belief in an all embracing order large enough to include the direct living, adapting relation of God to his creation, involved in the assertion of miracle."*

In discussing this question we cannot for a moment forget that it is inseparably related to God's methods of self revelation to men and of educating men. Christ did not appear teaching and healing in the midst of a civilization permeated with a high degree of Christian culture and versed in the principles of modern science. An enormous gap separates us who so critically study his methods and even the most favored of the Græco-Roman world. It was a period of miracle. All that could not be explained or understood was put down as miracle. The atmosphere was saturated with the miraculous. Men of all classes were constantly looking for miracle. It had become one of the commonly recognized signs of divine working and power. This became the natural test of the man who claimed special relations to divinity. This became the universal means by which men sought a hearing and a claim to spiritual leadership. Christ based his claims upon no such wonder-working power, but Christ came into a world of terribly limited and circumscribed ideas, and the only way he could do that for which he was sent, was to adapt himself and his methods to the human limitations, and through the use of these low ideas as a basis to build the spiritual

* King, Reconstruction in Theology, p. 70.

edifice of his mission. To assert that Christ treated his hearers in the same way and influenced them through appeal to the same motives that a modern leader uses, is to assert the use of a far vaster miracle than any in the Gospel record. Moreover it is to do violence with all that we know of God's methods in gradually training and leading men through the use and development of ideals which they have, no matter how inperfect they may be. Any other course is to break God's greatest law for his whole creation, the law of gradual growth.

There is direct evidence that Christ used miracles with reluctance. He deprecated the fact that the multitudes would not believe on the basis of his spiritual teaching alone, but demanded wonder working.* He positively refused idle requests for objective proof of his power.† He used miracle as a last resort to make men conscious of his presence and his divine authority. He used miracle where a divine compassion melted his heart and brought relief to suffering humanity.

With the elimination of miracles, the wonderful change in the faith of the disciples and the marvellous growth of the early Church is inexplicable. That change in faith, and that sudden growth was due to one mighty fact, the fact of the bodily resurrection of Christ. It was the risen Christ that transformed those weak, trembling men and made them over into mighty dynamos of spiritual power. It was the Risen Christ about whom Paul built his system of faith, and on whom he based the hope and glory of the Christian Church. Sanday says, "The truth is that the historian who tries to construct a reasoned picture of the life of Christ finds he cannot dispense with the miracles. He is confronted with the fact that no sooner had the life of Jesus ended in apparent failure and shame, than the great body of Christians, not an individual here and there, but the great mass of the church passed over at once to the fixed belief that he

* John VI, 26.

† Matt. XII, 38, 39. XVI, 1-4.

was God. . . There must have been something supernatural and divine, not that we can recognize, but which they could recognize with the ideas of their time. Eliminate miracles from the career of Jesus, and the belief of Christians from the first moment that we have undoubted contemporary evidence of it, say A.D. 50, becomes an insoluble enigma."*

The great miracle is Jesus himself, his life, his self-consciousness, his teachings, his spirit. Sinlessness is a perfect miracle for it is the direct intervention of spiritual power to alter natural processes of succession in cause and effect. Every man who has accepted Jesus Christ, every one who believes in his sonship, thereby accepts the greatest of miracles. Every man who accepts the Lordship of Christ in his life and through his power overcomes sin, thereby performs a genuine miracle, the natural laws of the physical man being subjugated to the gracious authority of a higher law which works in him through Christ.

Eliminate miracles and you eliminate the possibility of God's revealing himself as a personal Father to His children. You eliminate the possibility of spiritual intercourse and you eliminate the efficacy of prayer. The existence of the sphere of spiritual intercourse depends upon the existence of a sphere that is not amenable to natural law, that is often at variance with it and that is clearly superior to it, and which fulfils every condition of the miraculous.

Chapter Eleven. Immortality.

We have already seen that the thinking principle in man is distinct from the brain which it uses as its instrument. The brain is the connecting link between the physical and the psychical spheres of existence, and since death breaks this link, the superficial conclusion is made that the thinking principle

*Quoted by King, op. cit. p. 66. Hastings' Dictionary of Bible, Vol. 2, p. 627.

perishes in the decay of its instrument. Sir Oliver Lodge remarks that the weak point of this argument is its tacit assumption that what is not manifest is non-existent. The brain is our present organ of thought, but it does not follow that brain dominates thought, that inspiration is a physiological process or that every thinking creature in the universe has a brain. We terrestrial animals are all as it were, one family, and our hereditary links with the psychical universe consist of the physiological mechanism we call brain and nerve, but these material structures are our servants, not our masters. We may train them implicitly to serve our purposes; if one side of the brain is injured the other side may be trained to act instead. Destroy the brain completely and connexion between the psychic and material regions is severed. True, but cutting off communication is not the same as destroying the communicator nor is smashing an organ equivalent to killing the organist.*

John Stuart Mill admits that in science there is no evidence against the immortality of the soul but that negative evidence, which consists of lack of evidence in its favor, and even the negative evidence is not as strong as such evidence often is.†

There are however, certain lines of clear, positive evidence for immortality, which are as reasonable as many of the assumptions of science, though like some of the greatest assumptions of science, they lack absolute verification.

In the first place every tribe and people on the face of the earth that has come under the observation of science, has held in some form this belief in a future existence. This belief, then, appears as a fundamental human instinct that accords with the deepest facts of human nature and that is involved in self-consciousness and self-determination. This immensely significant belief persists in the face of science and intellectual criticism, as

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* Lodge, The Immortality of the Soul, p. 56.

† Three Essays, p. 201.

strongly as in the ages before science or criticism were thought of. It will not down, nor can it be reasoned with because it is rooted in the instinct, which forever baffles the sober efforts of reason.

In the second place, the evidence that carries most weight, is that which shows that man's nature is not explicable on the hypothesis that he is destined to only a few short years of this life, but is such as points to a nobler and more enduring state of existence. First is the fact that the scale of man's nature is too large for his present scene of existence. The shadow of infinitude shows itself in all his thoughts and imaginations and desires. Every new attainment of knowledge whets his appetite for more. His mind can soar beyond the physical universe and take in thoughts of God, eternity and infinity. The same illimitableness attaches to his imagination, the same to desire,—give a man all of the world that he asks for and he asks for more.*

> "I cannot chain my soul, it will not rest
> In its clay prison, this most narrow sphere.
> It has strange powers and feelings and desires
> Which I cannot account for or explain,
> But which I stifle not, being bound to trust
> All feelings equally, to hear all sides.
> Yet I cannot indulge them, and they live
> Referring to some state of life unknown."†

Again one of the dominant thoughts of Browning and other poets of the Idealistic School persists in the philosophy represented by Höffding of Copenhagen, in the idea of the conservation of value.‡ No real Value or Good is ever lost. Hence comes Lodge's definition of immortality,—"persistence of the essential and the real." The tendency of Evolution is to insist on the

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* Orr, Christian View of God and World, p. 156.

† Browning, "Pauline."

‡ Hoffding, Philosophy of Religion. Chap. "The Substance of Faith."

actuality of Value in quantity as well as quality. If the spiritual be real it cannot be stationary, but must increase and that growth must have infinity as its goal. Immortality is a special case of the general law that nothing in the whole universe really finally perishes that is worth keeping, that a thing once attained is not thrown away.*

This carries with it the persistence of personality in all creatures who have risen to the attainment of God-like faculties. All that leads us to put a value upon character and that God's main purpose in dealing with man is to strengthen character, strengthens belief in immortality. "All omens point towards the steady continuance of just such labour as has taught us all we know. . . . That which lies at the root of each of us lies at the root of the Cosmos too. Our struggle is the struggle of the Universe itself; and the very Godhead finds fulfilment in our upward striving souls."†

Without immortality this world ceases to be a moral world. There is too much imperfection and incompleteness in human life. There are subtle barriers here that prevent the moral life from being lived out to full fruitage in consequences for good or evil. "When might triumphs over right, when evil-doers succeed and the righteous perish, we are brought face to face with facts that bring an indictment of cosmic justice which are inconsistent with the concept of the world as a moral order."‡ These abounding paradoxes, our human strivings toward character and our faith in the worth of human personality convince us that there is a yet unwritten sequel to our life history, that this cannot be God's last word to us.

Again it is under the influence of this deathless hope that man's faculties find their largest scope and finest development. This consideration was the one that weighed most heavily

* Op. cit. p. 45.

† Meyers, Human Personality, II., p. 277.

‡ Schiller, Humanism, p. 252.

with that rigid critic, J. S. Mill, who said, "This hope makes life and human nature a far greater thing, it enlarges the general scale of feelings, the loftier aspirations no longer being kept down by the disastrous feeling of 'not worth while.'"* Professor Schiller also says in this connection, "Think what is involved in the assertion that character is eternal, indestructable; that we cannot escape from ourselves, that we are forging for infinity, that every deed leaves its mark upon the soul which may be modified, but never undone to eternity. Such ideas loosen all the nobility, all the power for god-like struggle which may nerve us to that unremitting self-improvement which lies at the foundation of the moral development of the race."† It is inconceivable that this which stands as the basis of humanity's progress toward moral achievement, should prove to be the creation of man's imagination. Here we have to deal with too mighty and real an effect to be explained without an equally mighty and real cause.

The analogy from nature points in the same direction. In the animal creation every instinct, every appetite and craving finds ready and admirable provision for its satisfaction. Not one is ignored. We have no rational basis for belief that nature treats man according to any different law. Because many of man's instincts are of a higher order, it cannot follow that nature makes an exception in his case alone and fails to provide as complete provision for satisfying these instincts as in the case of creatures lower in the scale of development.

Man in finding his most complete expression and best development in work, has become himself a creative force of the highest order. This creative force is other than the body which it drives, for when the body is crippled this force burns on undiminished, to achieve and create. This is a godlike

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* Op. cit. p. 249.

† Op. cit. p. 256.

attribute and at this point men find themselves linked indissolubly to the One Great Creative Spirit of the universe. This is not pantheism. It is rather Christian optimism based on rational faith. It is not conceivable that this Creative Principle should conserve all other forms of energy, as shown in the burning of coal and the transformation of chemical compounds, and allow man, the most perfect and only self-determining form of energy of which we know, to experience utter loss. It is too wanton a waste to lay at the door of a personal Creator or of mechanical evolution.

Then we must believe that this wonderful capacity for work and achievement, this bundle of spiritualized energy, must persist through the change we call death, and go on creating and achieving along the lines of development and capacity earned in this life.

The central principles of Christ's teachings, the value of personality, the worth of character, the sacredness of work, the sonship of the eternal God, with the abiding love of that relationship, all point to the persistence of the spirit of man into the realm of pure spirit where he will see God face to face, and where He that hath begun a good work in him will not leave it unfinished.

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